

GEOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS OF POWER

FREE WORLD/SINO-SOVIET BLOC

INTRODUCTION

This paper proceeds from the assumption that the power of coalitions like that of states can be reduced for analytical purposes to a relatively few elements, some of which are mainly geographic. In selecting "geographic elements" for detailed consideration, many environmental factors of powerhood were weighed, but most were discarded as not sufficiently determinant, or as more susceptible of analysis with elements not essentially geographic.

The main relationship considered herein is area, which is examined in connection with three related factors or elements: size, shape and position.

The basic principles of size, shape, and position applicable to states apply also in a general way to coalitions and blocs. Important among these principles are the following:

- (a) Other things being equal, large states have more abundant resources than small ones, and thus a greater chance of achieving the industrial productivity essential to military might.
- (b) Large states are generally better able to defend their territory than small ones because they can trade space for time and have a greater dispersal potential.
- (c) Theoretically, a compact shape has the greatest inherent strength, especially when accompanied by considerable size.
- (d) Position, in the sense of location relative to all physical phenomena and cultural features of the earth profoundly influences a state's strategic situation, as well as the flow of goods and ideas between states.

2.

(e) The position or exact location of a state on the surface of the earth may be fixed, but the implications of its position are continuously changing with technology and other factors, and must be constantly reassessed.

The degree to which a coalition functions as a unified state ~~varies~~ varies with the coordination and mutual assistance that takes place between parts. Size, shape, and position may favor such coordination or militate against it.

AREAS CONSIDERED

Ignoring Antarctica, the area of the Free World* comprises some 40,000,000 square miles, and that of the Sino-Soviet Bloc about 13,500,000

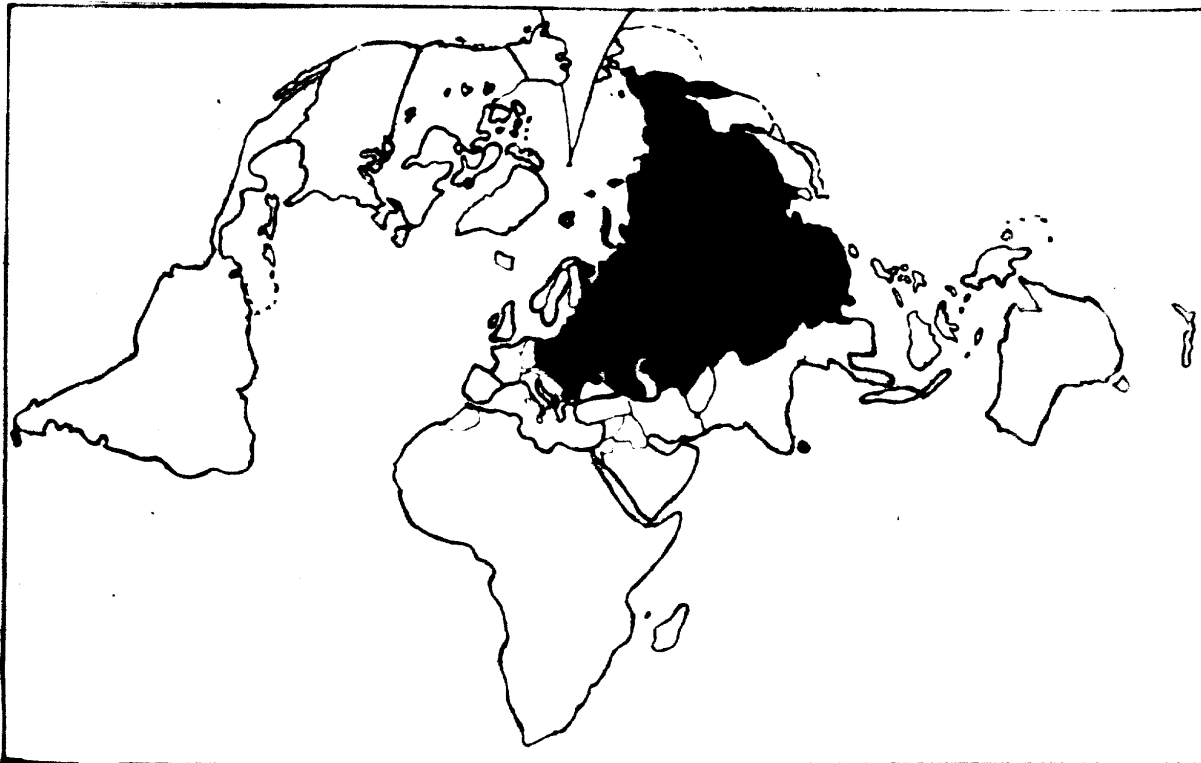


Fig. 4. FREE WORLD/SINO-SOVIET BLOC

* "Free World" here refers to all countries outside the Communist Bloc. The weighing of military relationships takes into account only those countries that now participate in defense arrangements to which the US is a party. The military of the Free World is not materially changing basic patterns.

square miles. The Bloc, which is roughly triangular in shape, takes in most of the earth's largest continuous land area. Africa, 11,530,000 square miles, is the only part of the Free World that comes close to matching the Bloc in size, shape, and compactness. If the Bloc were superimposed on Africa and the Middle East, Berlin would lie some 700 miles south of Capetown, Bering Strait would be located near the Cape Verde Islands, and North Vietnam would be in the vicinity of Tehran. Superimposition of the Bloc on North America and the Pacific Ocean would put Bering Strait near Hawaii, North Vietnam near the North Pole, and Albania, the only non-contiguous Bloc country, in the vicinity of the Panama Canal.

The Free World is characterized by great size and fragmentation; the Sino-Soviet Bloc by considerable size, compactness, and centrality. There are some 160* countries in the Free World, whereas the Bloc takes in 12. In contrast to most of the Bloc, which is continental in character, the Free World is dual--- maritime and continental. Ocean mobility gives the Free World such cohesiveness as it has and, from another point of view, makes it penetrable in ways the Bloc is not. Thus, Although the Free World controls the principal critical areas of sea passage, most of these areas lie within striking distance of the Bloc *see page* (see figure X and table on page 8).

* Figure is variable and open to interpretation since it depends on the way various colonial and quasi-colonial areas are counted.

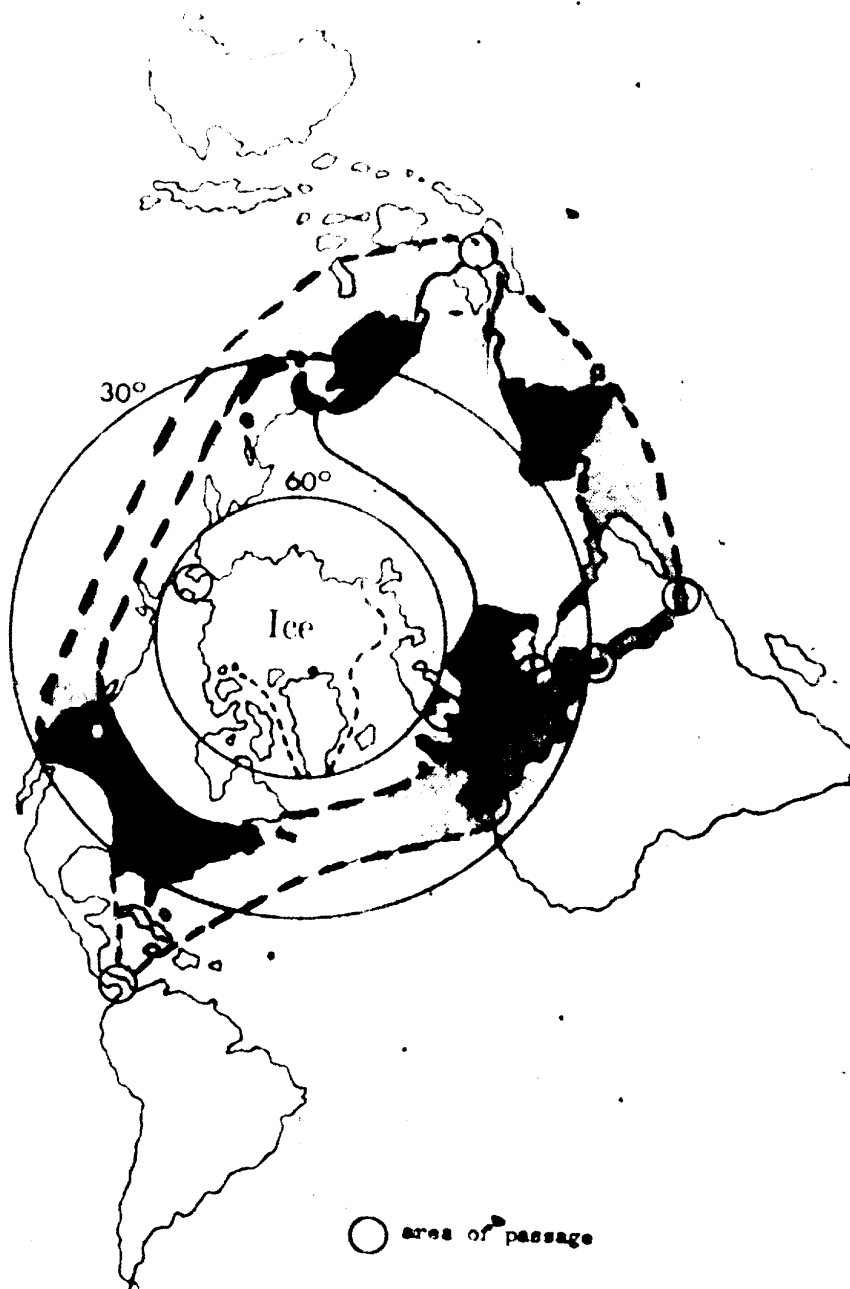


Fig. X

NORTHERN BELT OF SETTLEMENT AND MOVEMENT

4.

COMPARATIVE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Size, shape, and position give the Free World vital advantages over the Bloc in nuclear attack/defense equations. The US, the ^{power center} ~~core area~~ of the Free World, is now vulnerable to direct attack only from bases on the Eurasian land mass and from submarines, whereas the USSR, the ^{power center} ~~core area~~ of the B Loc, is vulnerable to attack not only from North American bases, but also from bases on the periphery of the Eurasian landmass, and from submarines and other craft in five seas.

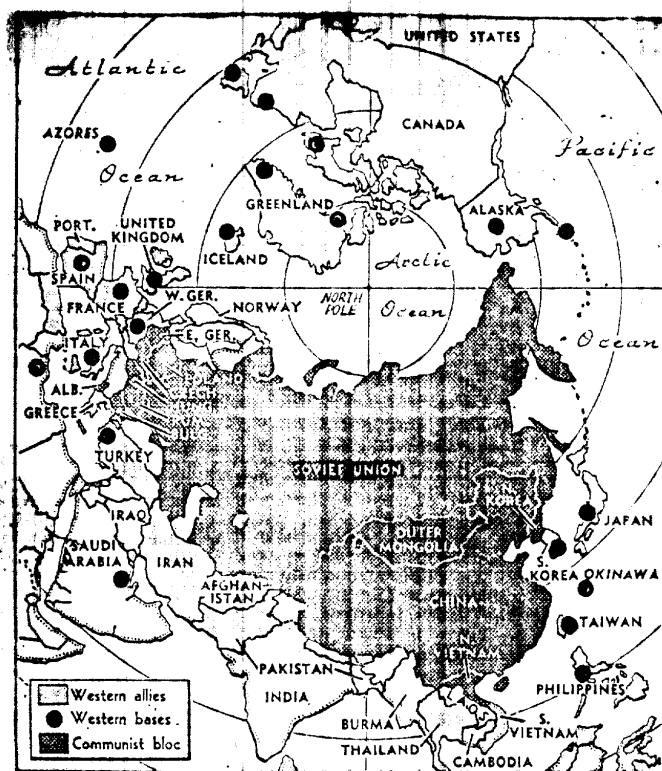


Fig. 2. Main US overseas bases.

The West derives paramilitary advantages in Europe from size, shape and position. Elsewhere, however, these factors seem to reinforce benefits accruing to the Bloc from the fragmented nature of the Free World, giving the Bloc an overall advantage.

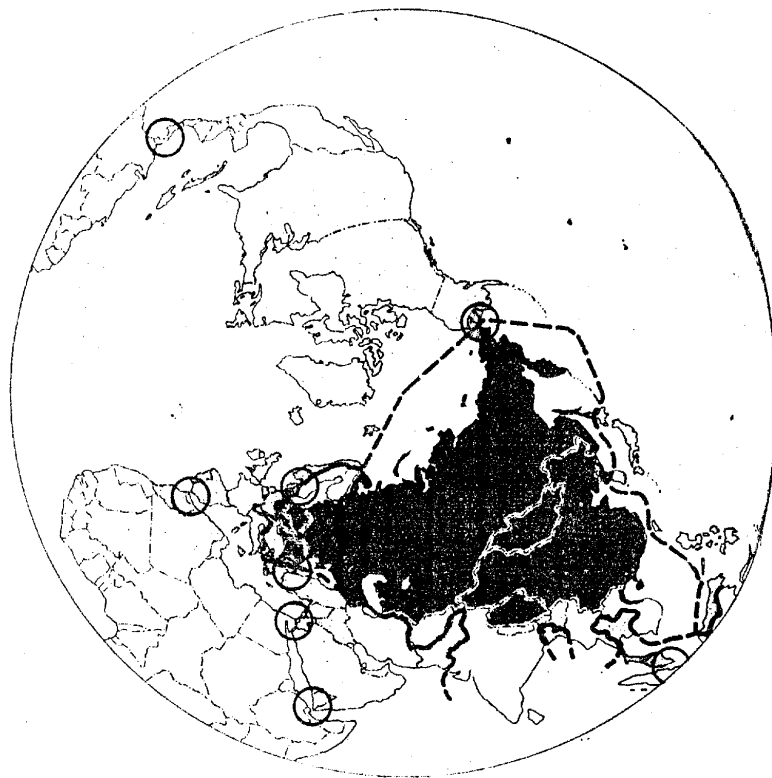
5.

Size, shape, and position seem to give the Bloc significant overall nonmilitary advantages vis-a-vis the Free World, mainly because of two related relationships: (a) proximity (large parts of the Free World are closer to the ~~power center~~ ^{power center} of the Bloc than to the ~~power center~~ ^{power center} of the West), and (b) the relative openness of the West, i.e., the Free World is open to all types of Bloc penetrative activity, whereas the Bloc's situation strongly favors selective exclusion of the goods, people, and ideas of the West. ^{contiguity} The compactness of the

Bloc area favors control by the two major states, the USSR and China, ~~thus contributing to unity of purposes and direction~~. In contrast the large number of states and the variety of peoples and cultures in the Free World make unity of purpose difficult to achieve. On the other hand, the theoretical advantages of the Bloc because of its compactness and contiguity are more apparent than real because of the underdeveloped state of transportation within the Bloc. The highly developed sea, air and land transportation systems of the Free World give it as great economic cohesiveness as is enjoyed by the Bloc, in spite of the fragmentation of the Free World.

The interrelationships of size, shape, and position seem to give the Free World net advantages over the Bloc in nuclear war, particularly all-out nuclear war, mainly because of the West's encircling base structure and its greater possibilities for dispersal. The Bloc, however, has theoretical conventional* war, paramilitary, and nonmilitary advantages, because of its greater compactness as contrasted to the openness of the Free World.

* "Conventional" is used reservedly since whether or not nuclear weapons are ever again employed in warfare, the fact of their existence, the possibility that they can be used, will affect all future wars.



○ areas of passage
--- Free World defense perimeter

Fig. x

US/USSR FACTORS

Although rigorous US/USSR comparisons are somewhat artificial*, they nevertheless have analytical value because of the core area relationship of the countries to the Free World and the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

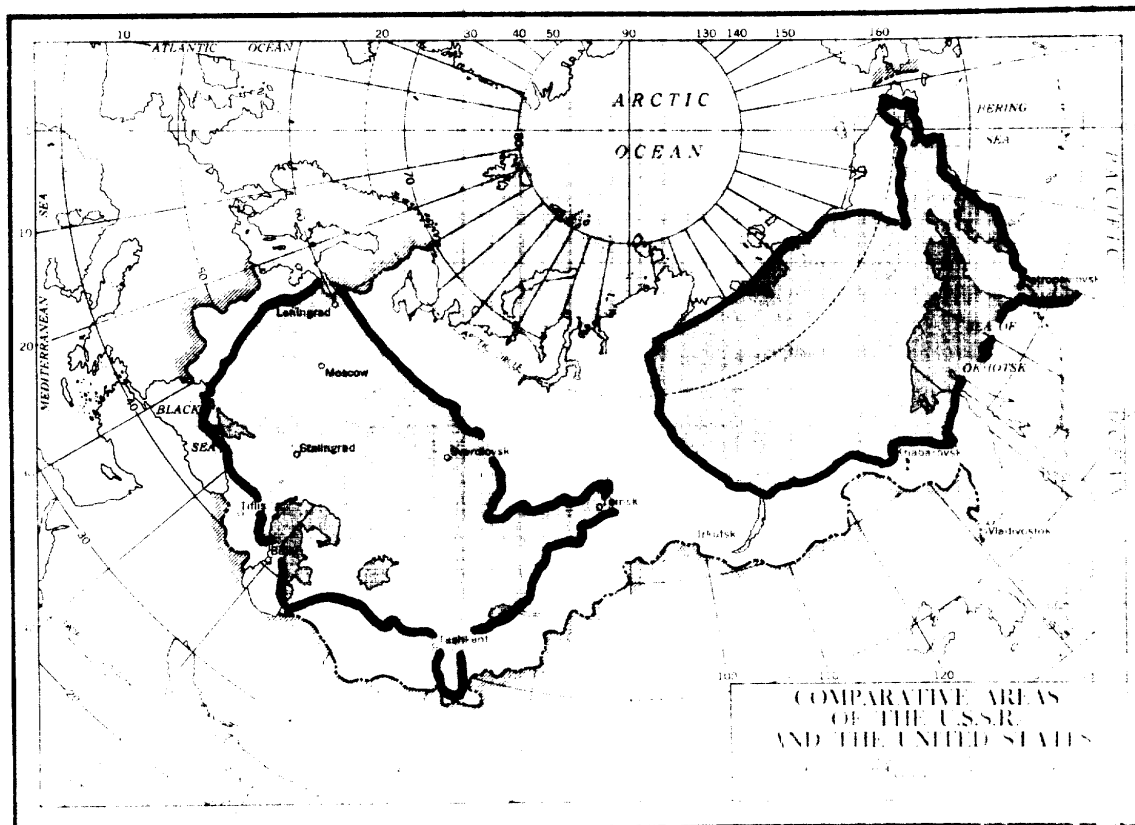


FIGURE 3. COMPARATIVE AREAS OF THE U.S.S.R. AND THE UNITED STATES

The USSR, with an area of some 8,650,184 square miles, covers about one sixth of the earth's surface and is by far the world's largest single nation. The US, including Alaska and Hawaii, takes in 3,552,198 square miles, making it one of the largest countries in the world, but still smaller than the USSR or Canada. Unlike the US, a great part of the USSR lies too far north for optimum habitation. In many places where the climate of the Soviet Union is good, the

* e.g. Much that is vital to US defense lies outside its continental limits, thus, strict US/USSR comparisons undervalue the US defense posture.

7.

soil is poor, and some of the richest land lies in regions too dry or too cold for farming. No single area in the USSR compares in extent, favorable location, and profitable use with the Mississippi valley of the US. Although the communications network of the USSR is being expanded, it is still sparse and does not compare in adequacy with that of the US. Unlike the US, which has long coasts giving unrestricted access to the sea, the USSR coastlines are predominantly icebound and many stretches are virtually landlocked, restricting seaborne communications markedly. Weak communications limit the USSR's ability to fully exploit its pivotal position and, to some extent, the resources of its vast area.

In conventional war, size and shape alone would give the USSR advantages over the US in depth of defense. Effective defense use of the USSR's vast spaces was well-illustrated in the Soviet victory over German forces during World War II. Untested, however, is the difference that greatly improved aircraft and other devices and techniques might make in conventional campaigns against large land powers such as the US and the USSR.

The USSR is more completely contiguous than the US and, in theory, would derive conventional war advantages from this. The contiguity of the US as a whole is broken significantly by the new States of Alaska and Hawaii. Apart from Alaska and Hawaii, the US has a compact, rectangular form that favors defense.

In all types of targets (military, industrial areas, major cities), the USSR seems to have nuclear war dispersion advantages over the US. The greater size of the USSR offers exceptional advantages in dispersal and secrecy for military installations of target significance, including counter-missile forces.

Even after allowing for the USSR's unfavorable location in relation to the sea, the USSR would still seem to have overall advantages in access to the

Approved For Release 1999/09/16 : CIA-RDP63-00314R000200170016-7

8.

rim of the Eurasian landmass. Elsewhere, the US would have the advantage.

The USSR derives theoretical advantages from being closer than the US to a greater number of critical areas of passage.

<u>US</u>	<u>Distance in miles from approximate geographic center of US and USSR to:</u>	<u>USSR</u>
3,200	Bering Strait	3,000
2,400	Panama Canal	7,800
4,700	Skagerrak and Kattegat	2,700
4,900	Straits of Gibraltar	4,300
6,000	Turkish Straits	2,800
6,700	Suez Canal	3,100
8,100	Bab el Mende	3,800
9,200	Singapore Strait	4,000

In magnitude of border defense needs, marked advantages seem to accrue to the US, because, inter alia, the frontiers of the US are much shorter.

US/USSR - Comparative Frontier Lengths in Statute Miles

	Continental US	US (incl. Alaska and Hawaii)	USSR
General coastline*	4,840	12,255	26,700
Land Frontiers	5,906	7,447	11,000
Total	10,746	19,702	37,700

* Not to be confused with the detailed tidal shoreline, which is much longer, for example, for the continental US: 53,677 statute miles.

9.

TRENDS

Assuming continuance of a bi-polar world in which Communism seeks to spread its influence by means short of all-out nuclear war, it is believed that the following trends related to size, shape, and position will be operative during all or part of the decade 1960-70.

1. Size seems certain to increase in importance as an element of national and coalition power. Developments of 1960-70 in transportation, weather control, water desalting, etc., may call for much reevaluation of the size factor in weighing existing and potential strength of the Free World against that of the Bloc.
2. Through continued improvement in transportation, the Bloc will exploit more fully its potential advantages in centrality, compactness, and contiguity.
3. As long as near equality in delivery systems is maintained, relative location will continue to give the Free World advantages in close-to-target retaliatory bases, and thus will contribute significantly to the West's deterrent. Overcoming the West's base advantages will continue to be an important Bloc objective.
4. The expected spread of nuclear capabilities in the Eurasian rimland may make the centrality of the USSR's position less advantageous than it now seems. From a relative location point of view, the USSR will have more reason than the US to be apprehensive about the growing nuclear capabilities of Eurasian countries.

10.

5. The seas, which cover about 9/12ths of the earth's surface, will take on added importance as dispersion space, giving new significance to the location of landmasses in relation to the sea and new meanings to "control of the sea." The USSR will continue its drive to become a maritime power.
6. "Remote" lands of the Southern Hemisphere, may become desirable as dispersal sites.
7. Recognition of the importance of size to great power status may motivate certain regions to an increasing degree toward unification of states, e.g. Western Europe.

In summary, if the Sino-Soviet Bloc is successful in pursuing its present policies the traditional view - continental, compact, centrally located, and land locked power grouping vs. dispersed, fragmented, maritime and continental power grouping - will lose much of its significance. Instead, there will be two multi-based, dispersed groups competing with each other, although the home center of the Sovbloc will continue to be of paramount importance for that group. The Sovbloc will have gone far toward beating us on our own ground. On the other hand, should the Free World successfully counter Bloc thrusts, the traditional view will retain much of its significance.